



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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## **WSDA offers free Johne's Disease testing**

OLYMPIA – Cattle owners can have their animals tested – free of charge – for Johne's Disease by the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

Johne's Disease, also called paratuberculosis, is a bacterial disease of the intestinal tract that is spread easily from one animal to another. The disease, which can be fatal, is found in about 22 percent of dairy herds and 8 percent of beef cattle herds nationwide.

Johne's is generally introduced to a herd from an outside animal that carries the disease, but appears to be healthy. In addition to cattle, the disease occurs in a number of hooved animals including, sheep, goats, deer, antelope and bison.

"The Johne's Disease Control Program is a great opportunity for cattle owners to take advantage of free testing to determine if the disease is on the farm, and to have a customized risk assessment performed by your veterinarian," said Dr. Dan Jemelka, a WSDA veterinarian coordinating the state's Johne's program. "Your veterinarian will be paid to do a complete herd assessment and evaluate animal raising practices, from calving to milking. A plan, specific for the herd, will then be developed with the owner/manager to reduce the likelihood of transmission of Johne's and other intestinal diseases."

This program is funded through a U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperative agreement. Funds for this fiscal year end July 31, 2004. However, the program is expected to be extended another year.

The emphasis is on performing risk assessments. To determine the prevalence of the disease in a particular herd, the state will pay for testing of up to 60 head. If a risk assessment and a herd management plan are completed, the state will pay for testing of up to 300 head. The program only applies to cattle at this time.

If you are interested in having a risk assessment or a herd management plan completed contact your veterinarian or Dr. Dan Jemelka at (360) 902-1967, e-mail [djemelka@agr.wa.gov](mailto:djemelka@agr.wa.gov). For more information on Johne's Disease, go to the University of Wisconsin Johne's site, <http://www.johnes.org> or the U.S. Animal Health Association, <http://www.usaha.org/njwg/njwg.html>.

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